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CONNECTIONS

'connecting to the world around us'



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What is CONNECTIONS?

- CONNECTIONS is a group-based service to assist in enhancing social skills as well as identifying and accessing resources in the community for students who have autism spectrum disorders (ASD) or related disabilities with social challenges
- Purpose:
 - assist with making a more smooth transition from adolescence to adulthood
 - increase peer relations
 - increase the likelihood of gaining/ maintaining employment



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WHO IS CONNECTIONS?

- Active ADRS clients referred by the VRC
- Experiencing difficulties with social relationships
- Transition age students from 16 to 23 years old
- Planning to pursue employment





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When and Where CONNECTIONS?

- Held twice monthly, 1st and 3rd
Tuesdays from 6:00 pm till 7:30 pm
- At Lakeshore Rehabilitation Facility
- Planned locations within the
community
- Classes are concurrent with school
year

Why CONNECTIONS?

Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD) differ from other developmental disabilities due to the challenges with social relationships and communication

These deficits impact all areas of their lives, including work

According to Mesibov, et al (1983) 'Social skills is the area in which people with autism show the greatest deficits, and one that is probably the most critical vocationally'



4) surveyed 68 adults with autism who had IQ scores above 50. Results indicated that the majority, **58%, were rated as having poor or very poor employment outcomes**

Cederlund, et al (2008) followed 70 males with Asperger's Syndrome and 70 males with autism for 5 years after diagnosis. Only 27% of AS group presented with good outcomes, **26% had a very restricted life with no occupation/activity, and no friends.** Results were considerably worse for the ones with the autism diagnosis.

Taylor & Seltzer (2010) evaluated 66 young adults with ASD after high school. **No one from sample was working full-time and the ones working had menial jobs.** The majority that were working were in sheltered workshops/day activity programs.

According to TEACCH, **85% of individuals**
with ASD who are working **lose**
employment due to social issues



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Social Rules

- Persons who have ASD have trouble understanding the unwritten rules that society uses
- we don't always play by the rules



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Transition-Age

It has been shown that if an adult with ASD **does not transition out of high school to employment** there is a **70% chance that they will not be gainfully employed** throughout their life (Dew & Alan, 2007).

Curriculum

- Is developed for participants who have ASD; however, can be applied to others with social deficits
- Based on skills needed for the transition from high school to adulthood
- Includes:
 - classroom lessons
 - group activities
 - training within the community

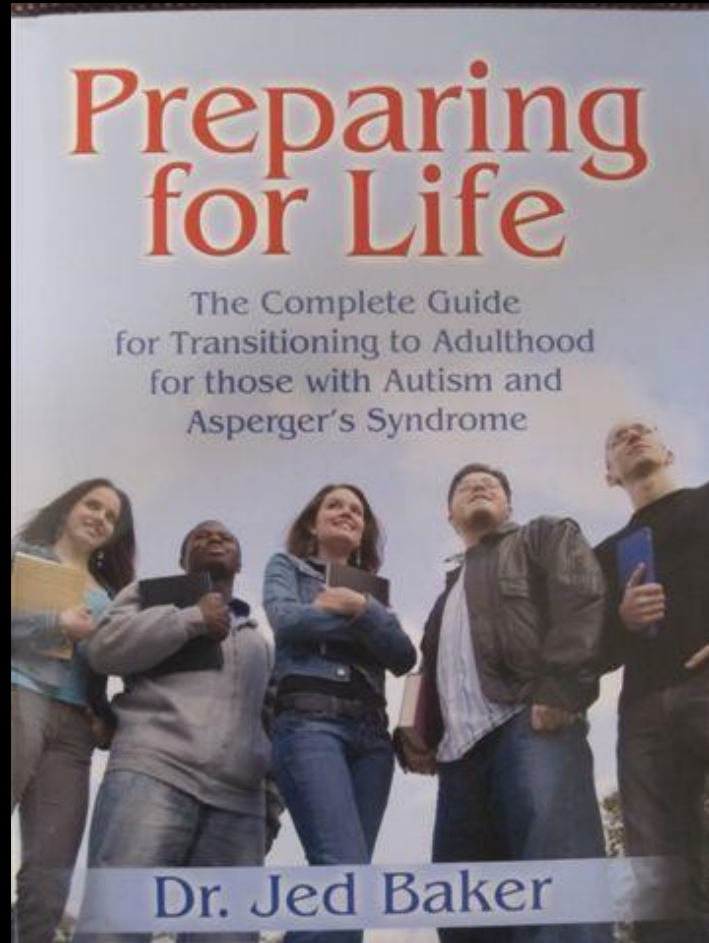


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Main resource





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Our Idols



Agenda

- First Impressions
- Initiating and Holding Conversation
- Understanding strengths/
challenges
- Art Outing
- Dealing w/ Anxiety
- Mall outing
- Dealing w/ Anger
- Groups-working together
- Movie Outing
- Dining Etiquette
- Dinner Outing
- Dating
- Complimenting Others
- Conflict Resolution
- Sportsmanship
- Bowling outing
- Job Interview Skills/ Personal
Hygiene
- Mock Interview
- Feedback/ Celebration



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Techniques

- Role-playing
- Games
- Videos
- Modeling
- Written exercises
- Peer teaching
- Mock trials
- Self-expression exercises





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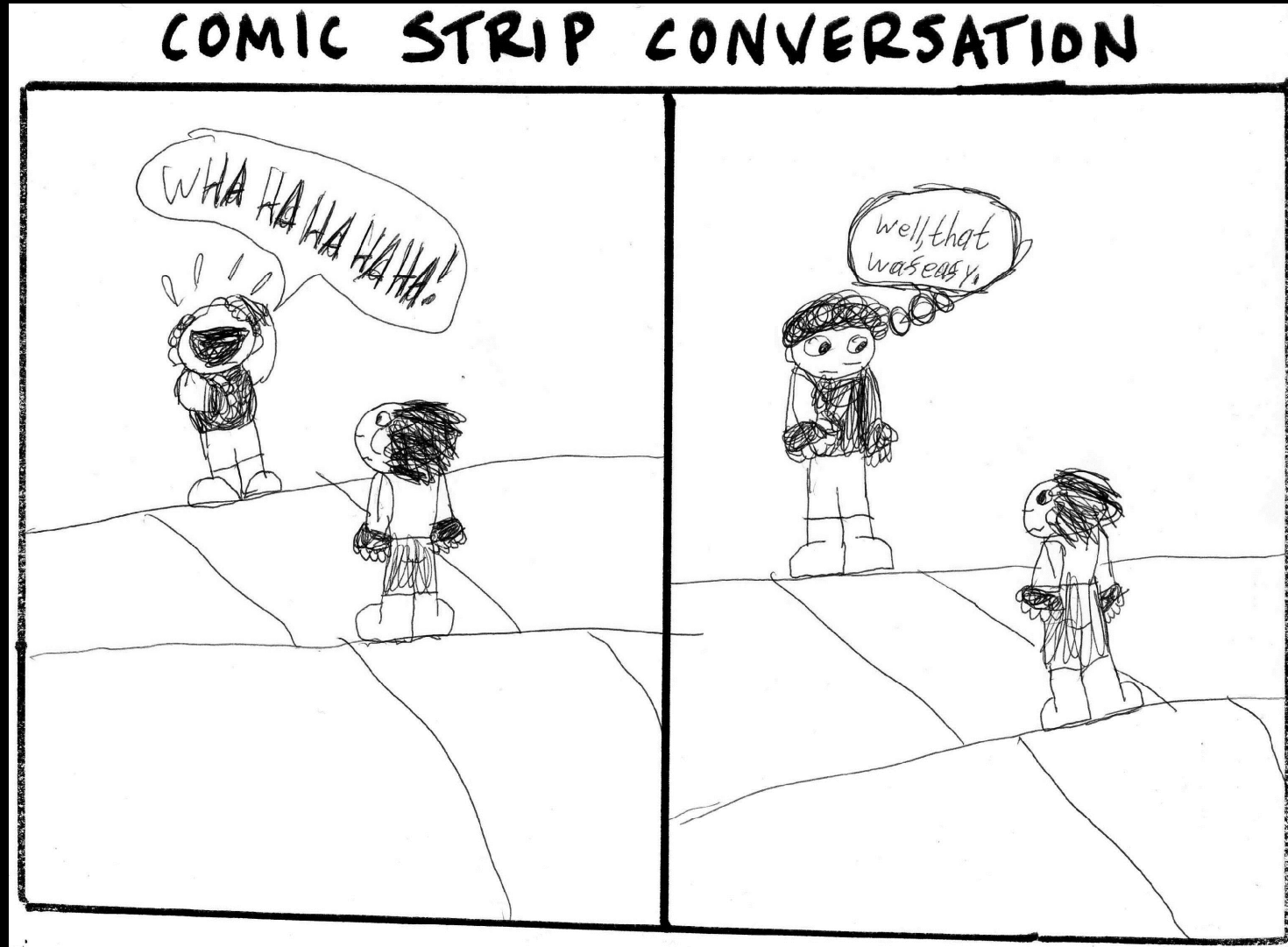


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Comic strip conversation technique



Cue card technique



Sam's Cue Card

Remember to keep your head
up/ look anywhere on the face

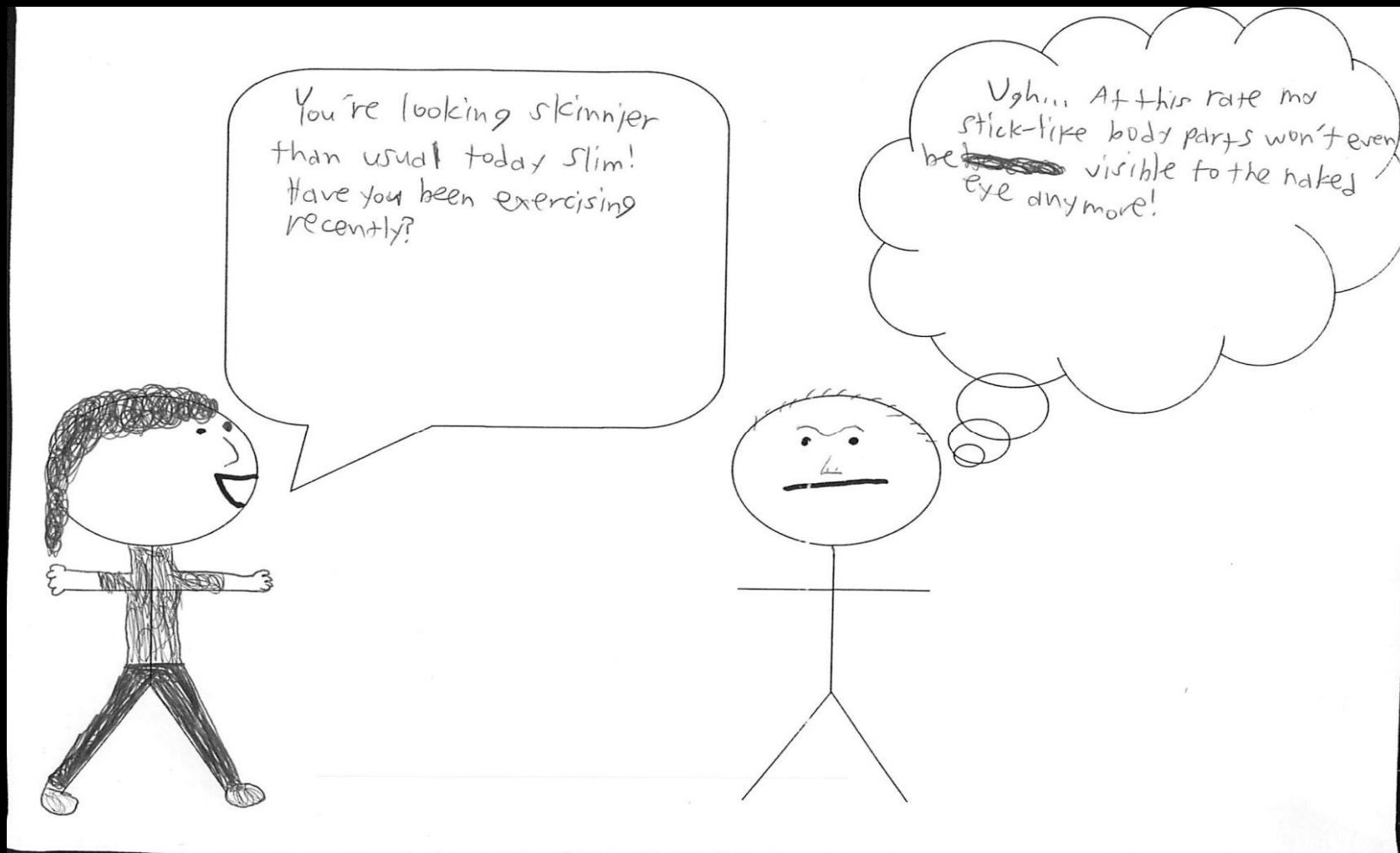


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theory of mind technique



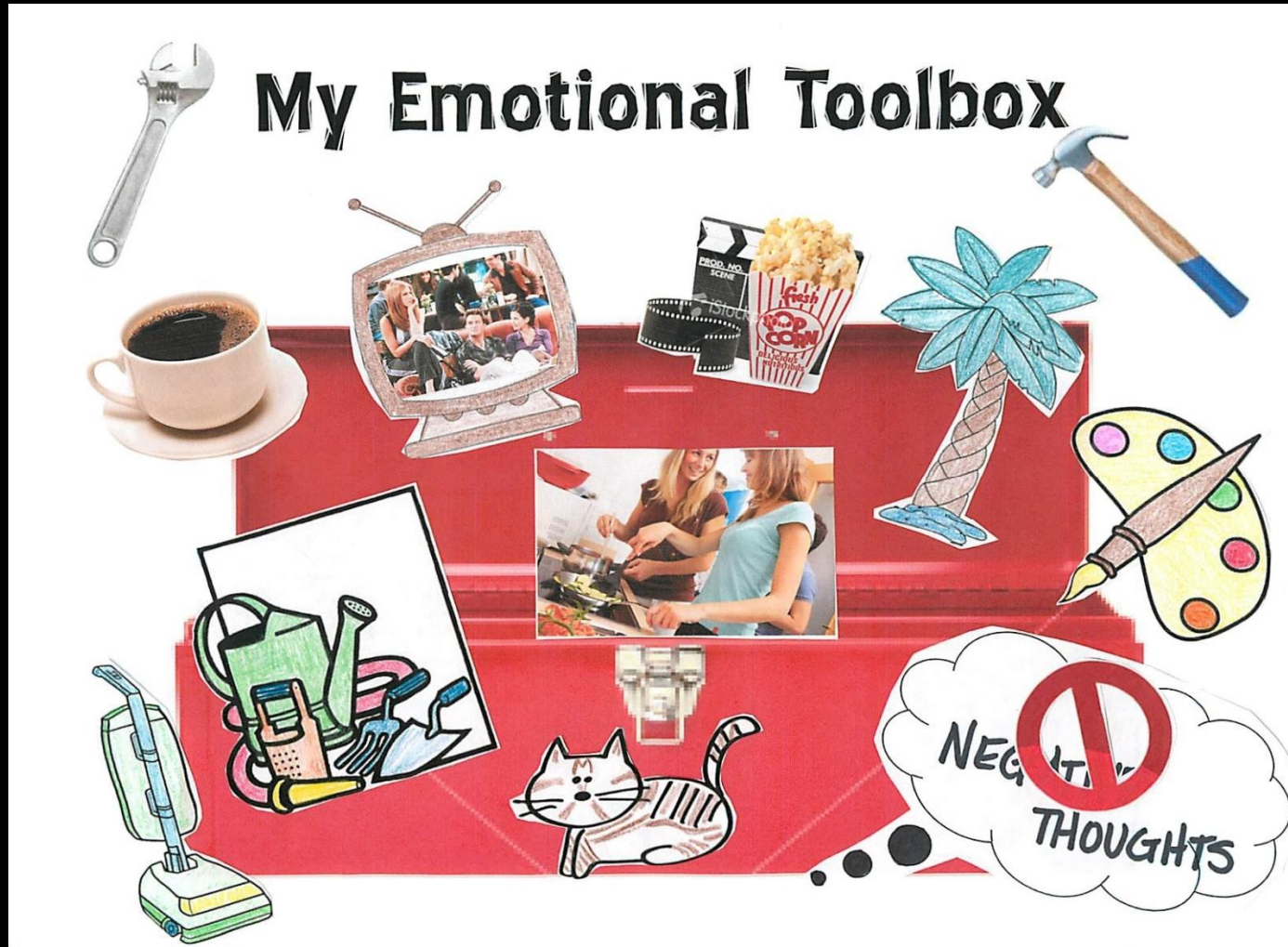


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Emotional Toolbox technique





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Using Peer Mentors

- Using peers as mentors in the group can be useful to model socially appropriate behavior.
- This can help the students understand the importance of good social skills.
- Some ways peer mentors can be used are:
 - Model appropriate behavior
 - To role-play situations
 - Participate in video modeling
 - Just be a support to the students



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Group goals technique

Group goals:

- Accomplish by setting group rules and recognizing when the skills we have covered are being utilized
- Rewarding by a point system



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Example of reward chart





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Celebration/ Graduation



Generalizing

SST alone will not solve the problem!

Research suggests that outcomes for SST's are ineffective if not generalized into functional daily use (Kowalski, 2010).

The ability to generalize can often be difficult for someone with a significant disability (Suomi et. al, 1993).



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Monitoring progress

Case notes to VRC include:

- lesson covered
- personal behavior of participant
- leaders' evaluation of progress
- concerns that need to be addressed

Emails/phone calls, when necessary

Connections Ending Report



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Connections Ending Report

Will include:

- Summary of participation
- How many sessions attended
- Concerns/areas to continue to work on
- Mock interview performance
- Possibly accommodations
- Other comments relevant to individual



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VRC's responsibilities

- Case must be open for duration of program
- Follow referral criteria (see next slide)
- Review case notes
- Communicate with leaders questions/concerns



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to Make a Referral

- Go into the SMILE case management system
- Under pages go to the Contract service browse page
- Once there click new to add a new vendor
- Under the vendor section type in Lakeshore where it says search by name
- Add Lakeshore as the vendor
- There isn't a check box under services for CONNECTIONS so type in CONNECTIONS under other services.
- Do not put a date in the tracking section



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Criteria for Involvement:

- Must be current VR client
- Transitional-age (typically 16-25 year olds)
- Basic reading and writing skills
- No major behavioral issues
- Able to function in a group setting
- Reliable transportation/money for outings

*If unsure if appropriate can discuss with leaders or have Voc. Eval completed



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CONNECTIONS³



PARTICIPANT FEEDBACK:

Please complete the following survey regarding your participation in the CONNECTIONS program and return in enclosed envelope. This information will help us better prepare for our upcoming program. Thank you for your time!

What would you change about the program:

lasted longer, more girls. Maybe some music activities.
a little more outings.

What do you feel was the most beneficial aspect of the program:

Improved social skills & helped me with coping.
Made me realize other people are like me.

What did you enjoy the most about the program:

I liked the mentors, & meeting new people.

What did you learn from participating in the program:

I learned to be assertive. Also that I'm not the only one
with differences.

Other suggestions/comments regarding the program:

Not really, might should find a way to advertise.



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Pre-test/Post-test

Rate skills in following areas:

- Appropriate greetings
- Initiating/hold appropriate conversations
- Confidence level regarding social interactions
- Peer relations
- Body language/gestures
- Able to manage anxiety/anger in appropriate manner
- Conflict resolution



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CONNECTIONS³



DBACK:

Please complete the following survey regarding your child's participation in the CONNECTIONS program and return in enclosed envelope. This information will help us better prepare for our upcoming program. Thank you for your time!

On a scale of 1 to 10 (1 being none, 10 being much), please rate improvement, if any, after participation in CONNECTIONS in the following areas:

1. Maintaining eye-contact:

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

2. Initiating conversation:

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

3. Increased confidence regarding social interactions:

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

4. Increased peer relations:

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

5. Body language/gestures:

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

What would you change about the program:

Nothing, Great Job.

What do you feel was the most beneficial aspect of the program:

The group interaction. "Being one of the gang"

How do you feel that the participant has benefited from the program:

Increased social skills AND he is starting to understand his disorder

Other suggestions/comments regarding the program:

The only suggestion: MORE! More classes, more meetings, more outings.

You guys do a great job! Bless you!

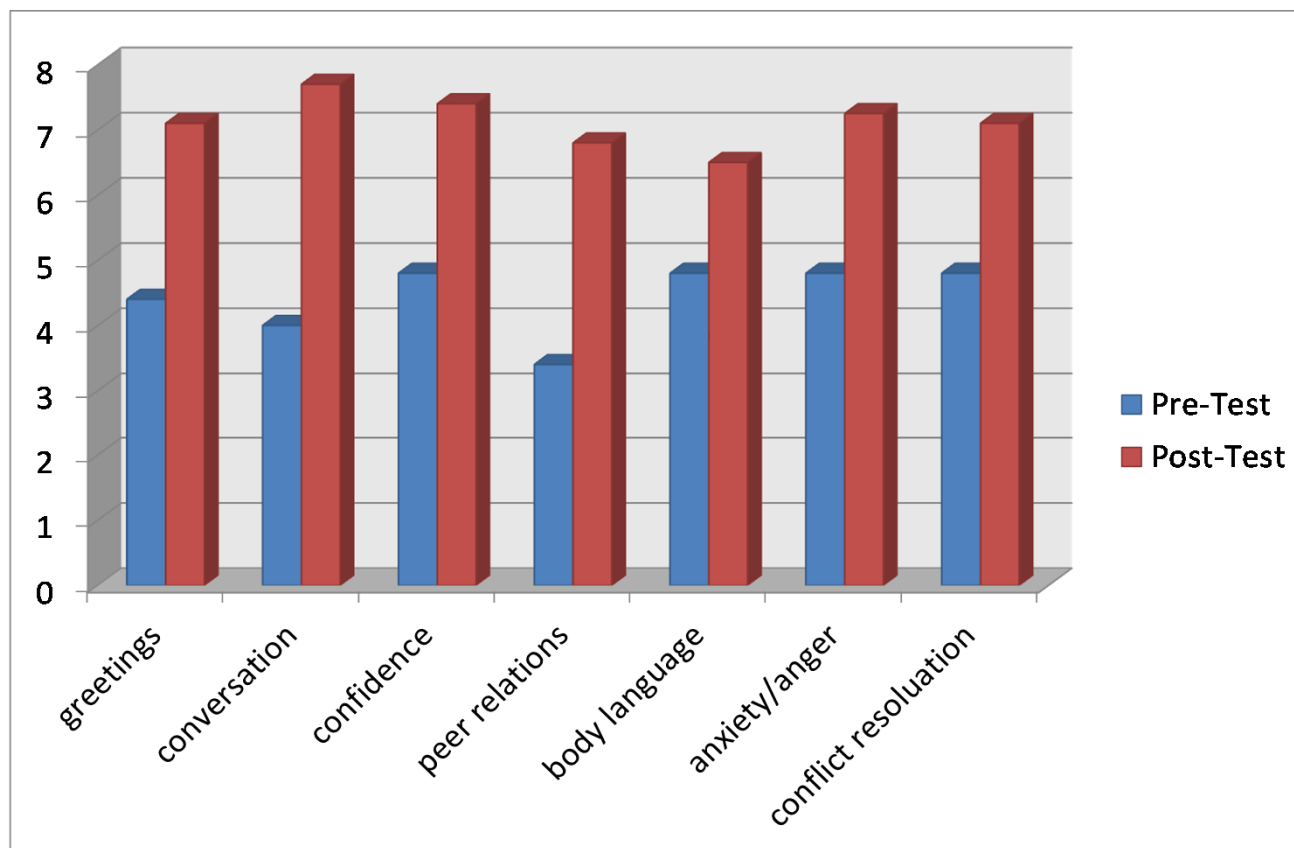


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Results of Pre-test/ Post-test



CONNECTING-Parents'

- Support group for parents/care-givers
- Held at same time as CONNECTIONS group and facilitated by VR Counselors
- Data suggests that parents of adolescents with ASD report stress levels beyond even the high levels of depression and anxiety identified by parents of children with severe intellectual disabilities (White and Hastings, 2004).
- Provides these parents opportunities to:
 - Discuss concerns they have with child transitioning into adulthood
 - Share resources
 - Learn from guest speakers about transitional needs for their child

Leaders

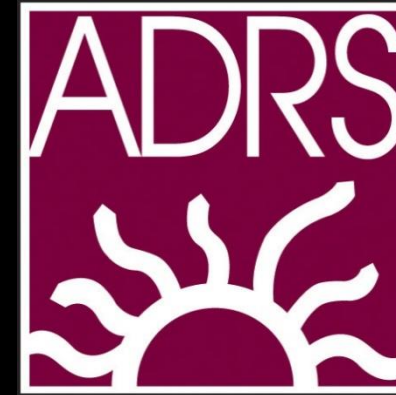
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